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Review and appraisal of progress made in the implementation of the twelve critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action

Further actions and initiatives for overcoming obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

Letter dated 1 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the final report of the European Parliament on the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action (see annex).

On behalf of the Presidency of the European Union, I should be grateful if you would have the text of the report annexed hereto circulated as a document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) António **Monteiro**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations

* A/S-23/1.

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Annex to the letter dated 1 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English, French and Spanish]

Report of the European Parliament on the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action

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PROCEDURAL PAGE

At the sitting of 2 February 2000 the President of Parliament announced that the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities had been authorised to draw up an own-initiative report, pursuant to Rule 163 of the Rules of Procedure, on the follow-up to the Beijing Action Platform.

The Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities had appointed Miet Smet and Lissy Gröner co-rapporteurs at its meeting of 26 January 2000. At its meeting of 17 February 2000 the Conference of Committee Chairmen authorised the appointment of two co-rapporteurs.

It considered the draft report at its meetings of 23 February 2000, 21 March 2000 and 18 April 2000.

At the last meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Theorin, chairperson; Eriksson vice-chairperson; Gröner and Smet, co-rapporteurs; Bordes, Fraisse, Gorostiaga Atxalandabaso, Gröner, Hautala, Izquierdo Rojo (for Ghilardotti), Karamanou, Klass, Müller E.F., Prets, Schmidt (for Dybkjær), Smet, Sörensen and Swiebel.

The report was tabled on 3 May 2000.

The deadline for tabling amendments will be indicated in the draft agenda for the relevant part-session.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

European Parliament resolution on the follow-up to the Beijing Action Platform (2000/2020(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December 1948),

- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women (31 March 1953),

- having regard to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 18 December 1979,

- having regard to its resolution of 11 June 1986 on the results of the UN Conference concluding the Decade for Women (1975-1985) held in Nairobi (15-26 July 1985),[1]

- having regard to the Vienna Human Rights Conference of 1993,

- having regard to its resolution of 4 July 1996 on the Follow-up to the Cairo Conference on Population and Development[2],

- having regard to its resolution of 15 June 1995 on the participation by the European Union in the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing: 'Equality, Development and Peace',[3]

- having regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in Beijing, on 15 September 1995 by the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace,

- having regard to its resolution of 21 September 1995 on the Fourth World Conference in Beijing,[4]

- having regard to the Council Recommendation of 2 December 1996 on an equal role for men and women in the decision-making process,[5]

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1 OJ C 176, 14.7.1986, p.64.
2 OJ C 211, 22.7.1996, p. 31.
3 OJ C 166, 3.7.1995, p. 92.
4 OJ C 269, 16.10.1995, p.146.
5 OJ L 319, 10.12.1996, p.11.

- having regard to its resolution of 16 September 1997 on incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities - 'mainstreaming',[1]

- having regard to its resolution of 9 March 1999 on the progress report on the follow-up to the Communication: Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities,[2]

- having regard to its resolution of 16 September 1997 on discrimination against women in advertising,[3]

- having regard to its resolution of 16 December 1997 on trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation[4] and on further actions in the fight against trafficking in women,[5]

- having regard to its resolution of 9 March 1999 on the state of women's health in the European Community,[6]

- having regard to its resolution of 4 November 1999 on the Commission's proposal "Guidelines for Member States' Employment Policy 2000",[7]

- having regard to its resolution of 17 November 1999 on the adoption of a programme of Community action (DAPHNE) (2000-2003) on preventive measures to fight violence against children, young persons and women,[8]

- having regard to its resolution of 3 February 2000 on women and science - mobilising women to enrich European research,[9]

- having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities (A5-0125/2000),

A. whereas the Treaty of Amsterdam provides a stronger legal basis for Community action in favour of equality between women and men by making equality a task, a principle and a goal of the Community, as stipulated in Articles 2 and 3 of the EC Treaty,

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1 OJ C 304, 6.10.1997, p. 50.
2 OJ C 175, 21.6.1999, p.72.
3 OJ C 304, 6.10.1997, p. 60.
4 OJ C 14, 19.1.1998, p. 19.
5 Report Sörensen on the agenda of this part-session.
6 OJ C 175, 21.6.1999, p.68.
7 Minutes of that sitting, Part II, Item 5.II.
8 Minutes of that Sitting, Part II, Item 1.
9 Minutes of that Sitting, Part II, Item 2.

B. whereas women's and children's rights are an integral, inalienable and indivisible part of universal human rights,

C. whereas economic independence for women is essential in order to attain true equality and whereas poverty is a phenomenon affecting women in particular,

D. whereas the empowerment of women is a crucial factor in the eradication of poverty and necessary for the full development of economic resources,

E. mindful of the lack of indicators and benchmarks in the Beijing Platform for Action,

F. whereas the rising employment rate in Europe requires the promotion of specific measures on both the demand and the supply side of the offer, to facilitate women's access to skilled jobs,

G. whereas the wage gap between men and women in the EU is up to 30 %,

H. whereas women encounter specific health problems requiring particular attention from the competent authorities; whereas the focus should be on sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV, reproductive health services and family planning; whereas health care and services should be made available to all women, including migrant women, women refugees and victims of trafficking,

I. whereas the 1995 Platform for Action expressly mentions the freedom of decision and responsibility on matters related to sexuality, full respect for the integrity of the individual and equality in the relationship between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction;

1. Recognises that various aspects of women's life in the EU have improved since 1995, but deplores the lack of agreed indicators, gender segregated data, benchmarks and a clear timetable in the Platform for Action which is a major obstacle to a correct evaluation of progress achieved in the last five years;

2. Requests agreement on a Fifth UN World Conference on Women to be organised in 5 years in order to assess the advancement of women in the areas of equality, development and peace;

3. Urges the participants at the New York Conference on Beijing + 5 to establish indicators, benchmarks and a precise time schedule; to divide para 2. into two

4. Requests that in the future EU Charter of Fundamental Rights women's rights and those of the girl child should not be considered as 'special' rights, but as an integral part of universal human rights in the order to achieve the objective laid down in article 2 of Treaty;

5. Asks the Council, the Commission and the Member States to take vigorous action to tackle violence against women wherever it takes place, in the home, at the workplace, in society in general and in armed conflicts, where rape is declared a war crime according to Articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (July 1998), which needs to be ratified by all Member States and to provide support;

6. Urges the UN to emphasise gender mainstreaming in the resolution of armed conflicts, peace-building, and reconciliation;

7. Recommends that the EU, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and NGOs, conduct a multiannual campaign against violence and discrimination against women, also through EU relations with third countries;

8. Requests the Commission to present a report on the implementation of recommendations contained in the document on the consultation of management and labour on the prevention of sexual harassment (COM(96)373);

9. Calls on the Commission to present a report on the follow-up by the Member States to the memorandum on equal pay for work of equal value (COM (94) 6), and calls for implementing legislative proposals to ensure strict application of article 141 of the **EC** Treaty;

10. Calls on the EU Delegation in New York not to accept renegotiation of the agreed Platform for Action, but to speed up the implementation in the ***EU*** Member States;

11. Calls upon the EU Member States to take the following measures in order to tackle gender gaps in employment:
- re-evaluating women's jobs and functions with a view to replacing all existing systems containing hidden discriminations;
- evaluating the impact of part-time and atypical forms of working on social security contributions, retirement and the increase in poverty among women;
- enforcing the right of equal pay for work of equal value, by developing a gender neutral method of classifying jobs and functions and ensuring women's empowerment at social partner level, so that women and men participate on an equal basis in collective bargaining and social dialogue;
- promoting women's entrepreneurship and ensuring women's access to and control over credit and technology;
- developing and implementing programs for and with women to guarantee gender balanced access to new technologes, especially in the information sector;

12. Strongly supports a people-friendly economy, allowing for diversified careers for men and women, job sharing, the encouragement of the role of men in the household and their participation in family life, flexible working time adapted to the reality of men's and

women's lives, by facilitating career breaks, child care and care of the elderly;

13. Underlines the need for lifelong learning and vocational training to promote women's access to skilled jobs and to prevent womens's computer illiteracy;

14. Urges the EU to step up the fight against poverty and social exclusion by pursuing a more concerted policy in the field of social protection;

15. Calls upon the EU Member States to advocate the use of quotas, as a transitional measure to achieve balanced representation of women and men in political life and calls for the provision of political training and information for women candidates by the parties so that they may enter political life with confidence;

16. Requests the EU Member States to develop new mechanisms and strategies, including the use of quotas, to achieve a critical mass of women leaders in all areas and all democratic institutions, and at all levels of decision making, and insists that special attention be given to social partners' level;

17. Strongly supports a more positive and realistic portrayal and image of women in the media, underlines the need for a more gender balanced participation at all decision making levels of the mass media industry and encourages the media industry to take initiatives which help to attract female journalists;

18. Highlights the fact that many health problems affect women only or affect them differently; calls accordingly for preventive measures and health promotion directed specifically at women; urges that specific attention be paid to the right to reproductive health; calls especially for actions to prevent the increasing number of girl pregnancies by providing contraceptives to young people;

19. Asks for legislative initiatives to combat sex tourism involving children and child pornography on the Internet;

20. Urges the EU Member States to provide for adequate penal sanctions for the practice of sexual mutilation perpetrated within the EU;

21. Requests the EU Member States to pay particular attention to the problems of migrant women and other groups who are particularly vulnerable (especially to violence and other forms of mistreatment);

22. Calls for priority to be given to the following measures at EU level:
- the presentation of a proposal for a directive on positive action measures (Art. 141 TEC) recognising the collective nature of positive action to redress structural imbalances in society,
- the provision of a single coherent legal basis for equality for women and men in all

policy areas to be introduced into the Treaty,

- a proposal for a Fifth Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men that is adequately funded and includes targets, benchmarks and assessment mechanisms,
- the setting up of a Council of Ministers responsible for Equal Opportunities, as well as the application of the gender perspective principle to all other Councils,
- the setting up of a Directorate in the Commission for gender equality, responsible for equality policies, gender mainstreaming and the Fifth Action programme,
- the application of gender mainstreaming to all EU negotiations, treaties and programmes relating to Central and Eastern Europe; the consideration of the position of women in society and their rights in the process of screening and monitoring the applicant countries;
- recognition of a right of asylum for women who are the victims of oppression and persecution based on their gender;
- establishment of common definitions of trafficking in women and sexual exploitation with a view to strengthening police and judicial cooperation;

23. Urges the Commission and the EU Member States to pay special attention to the fact that, in development cooperation, women are the key to sustainable development and to environmental sustainability and requests to consequently to include women and a gender perspective in all planning, implementation and evaluation of development cooperation;

24. Recognises the important role played by the partnership with civil society, in particular women's NGOs;

25. Calls upon the EU Member States and the European Commission to provide sufficient financial resources to ensure that the aforementioned measures and gender mainstreaming are duly implemented in order to achieve the goals of the Platform for Action;

26. Urges the Commission and the EU Member States to insist on respect for women's rights in relations with third countries, also by the inclusion of the respect for women's rights in parliamentary and ministerial dialogue in the context of discussions on human rights clauses; and to help combating all violations of women's rights; the respect of women's rights should be one of the main conditions for the granting of aid and should be closely monitored in all external relations and cooperation;

27. Calls on the European Union to monitor the work of all International War Crimes Tribunals and to endeavour to ensure that whenever women are victims of sexual abuse in wartime responsibilities are internationally established;

28. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, Commission, Governments of the EU Member States and the UN Secretary General.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Introduction

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) was adopted at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (September 1995) by representatives of 189 countries. It builds on the commitments made during the UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 and on related commitments made in the UN global summits and conferences held in the 1990s. The Platform identifies strategic objectives for action and assigns to governments, the international community, non-governmental organisations and the private sector responsibilities for its implementation.

The Platform is an agenda for fundamental change in twelve critical areas of concern: poverty; education and training; health; violence; armed conflict; the economy; power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms; human rights; media; environment; the girl child.

Five years after Beijing, the special session of the General Assembly to be held in June 2000 "Women 2000: Gender equality, development and peace for the 21st century", will provide an opportunity to review achievements, obstacles and good practices and to recommend future action to achieve these goals.

Your rapporteurs stress that the 2000 review process shall in no way open a renegotiation of the commitments made in Beijing. All twelve critical areas of concern are important and need to be addressed. Gender discrimination is present in all fields and lack of progress in one area inevitably has repercussions on others.

Implementation of the Platform - Preliminary remarks

The answers supplied to UN questionnaires on implementation reveal that the critical areas of concern were education and training (86%), power and decision-making (85%) and health (80%), poverty (75%) and violence (73%).

As far as the EU Member States are concerned, the questionnaires show a concentration on the following critical areas: women and the economy, education and training and violence against women. Overall, least attention was given to the girl child, the environment, the media and armed conflict.

Changes and trends in the EU

The last five years were characterised by profound political, social and economic changes. Conflicts particularly affect civilian populations, specially children and women who have been subject to specific and gross violations of their human rights through violence and systematic rape. Secondly the stream of refugees strongly increased, which is also related to the rather new

phenomenon of trafficking in women and children. Economic change and instability often resulted in increased poverty, affecting women in particular. The transformation of the pattern of family life and the growing amount of one-parent families affect the living situation of women in a particular way as well. Frequently their living standard and human security decreases. The demographic evolution shows a proportional increase of the ageing population which is related to the considerable rise in care duties, which are mainly performed by women.

Next to these global changes in society, certain discriminatory practices still persist such as: occupational segregation and discrimination; wage gap between women and men; unequal sharing of responsibilities for household and care tasks. Attitudes, beliefs and the persistence of traditional and stereotypical gender roles, often re-inforced by legal and/or institutional structures, remain powerful "barriers" to women's advancement. However positive trends or " successes" are arising in both fields of practices and attitudes.

The identification of the exact consequences on women's living situation is being complicated by the lack of resources, specific targets and benchmarks, data broken down by sex and age and monitoring mechanisms.

In the first section which is mainly an evaluation of the implementation process of the Beijing PfA, your rapporteurs will focus on four themes, which have an impact on the twelve critical areas of concern. Special attention will be paid to the neglected areas of concern. The four guiding horizontal elements in the review of the Pfa are:

- A. Globalisation and the economic empowerment of women
- B. Women, science and technology and the new information age
- C. Women in the decision-making process
- D. Women's rights are human rights

A second section dwells upon recommendations of further actions and initiatives which are needed to accelerate the implementation process. These recommendations are grouped in a horizontal manner as well.

Part I: Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

A. Globalisation and the economic empowerment of women

Simultaneously with the globalisation process , the influx of women into the labour market has increased while the demand side(the employers) of the labour market was not able to correspond to this evolution. Furthermore women are less familiar than men with information technology, which goes hand in hand with globalisation of society. All these evolutions naturally have an impact on the process of economic empowerment of women and their position on the labour market.

Although currently the employment rate of women is 20% below men's employment rate, statistics of 1988 en 1998 show a deviating evolution between the rates of men and women. The latter

increases with 6.2% while the former decreases with 3.5%. During the last 5 years the employment rate of women is also characterised by a bigger increase ,+1.5% against a rise of only 0.7% of men's employment rate.

The labour market remains gender segregated: women are over-represented in low-wage, low-status and precarious jobs (80% part-time and 50% temporary jobs) and under-represented in managerial and professional occupations. Of all working women in 1998 31.8% performed part-time labour, while the share of the male working population with a part-time job only adds up to 5.9%.

The unemployment rate of women is higher than that of men and the decrease during the recent time-period is slightly lower than the figures of the male counterpart of the population. Currently women's unemployment rate is 3% above men's unemployment rate, 10.4% to 7.5%.

The position of women on the globalised labour market is also characterised by lower wages than these of men. In 1995, the gross monthly earnings of women was on average 72% the earnings of men. A conclusion that can be drawn from the overall averages is that women are not in equal work positions, they are in lower paid positions.(Eurostat, statistics in focus, 6/99)

On the one hand objective explanations for this wage gap can be found which do not directly relate to discriminatory practices linked to equal pay for work of equal value, but are related to the career development of women.

However, on the other hand non-objective factors are causing the persisting wage gap as well such as the system of evaluating jobs which is being used to classify jobs and determine corresponding earnings. Women's jobs are frequently unjustifiably less valued than those of men which clearly indicates discriminatory practices.

Due to gender inequalities in employment, wages, social protection and training, the risk of poverty is higher for women than for men. It is unacceptable that in many countries in the EU it's a poverty risk for women to have children. A key element is social protection. As protection systems are still based on the male breadwinner model, the EU should move to the individualisation of rights.

During the past years the EU has developed an impressive repertory of measures in order to tackle gender gaps on the labour market which include guidelines on equal treatment and pay, a directive on parental leave which is a non transferable individual right, shift of burden of proof, the creation of an equal opportunities pillar for the labour market in the employment guidelines.

Despite the already substantive arsenal or existing framework, more initiatives are still needed in order to further improve gender equality on the labour market and to encourage the economic empowerment of women.

A reappraisal of women's and men's roles in the labour market and in society is needed, in order to overcome gender segregation in employment and the unequal division of responsibilities in the

domestic sphere. People-friendly structures and organisational culture should be introduced: flexible time, job sharing, diversified career structures while maintaining full social protection.

A key consideration is to recognize women's other commitments, for instance by providing childcare on site or re-imbursement of childcare costs for pre-school children or training courses within school hours and school terms, and by encouraging men through campaigns to take on their family responsibilities. Many women work in this care sector and these jobs should be re-estimated to their indispensable value. The EU should also develop a legal framework for the largely unregulated sector of paid domestic labour - which employs many women, often migrant women. Further priority measures should aim at overcoming the split in the labour market and at enlarging the job choices for women; policies to empower women for decision-making posts in the private sector, full day child and care facilities in all EU member states in order to enable men and women to work and at the development of a gender neutral method to classify jobs.
Clearly the main actors in this field are the social partners and the Member States of whom can be expected to transform the existing legal framework into reality.

B. Women, science and technology and the new information age

Women are significantly underrepresented in science due to educational systems. Segregation and lack of encouragement begin very early in the education systems and the traditional training routes are extremely difficult to enter for most women. Statistics on higher education of Eurostat reveal that while only 7% of girls opt for engineering or informatics,almost one fifth, 18% of male sholars aims at graduating in this direction. It is important to increase the interest of girls in technical subjects and natural sciences already at primary level and to ensure a balanced participation of men and women in decision making in universities and research institutes.

The 5th Framework Programme for Research has integrated the gender mainstreaming approach and a monitoring method 'gender and science watch system' to increase the number of women involved in research. In its communication "Women and science", the Commission sets the objective of achieving 40% of women in scholarship, advisory groups and monitoring panels.

The Information Society presents many opportunities that women should benefit from, to avoid the division of society by computer illiteracy: for ex. Internet is used mainly by men. In 1997, only 3.6% of women used internet at home compared to 5.5% of men. It is necessary to assess what women's learning needs are and to facilitate their adequate access to information and communication technologies (ICT). The new Initiative "Lifelong Learning" must focus on women and ensure a minimum access of 50%.

A Community Initiative such as NOW, training many women in a range of technical skills, should be continued by the EQUAL programme. Women tutors for technical subject areas can act as role models or mentors for the trainees and build women's confidence.

C. Women in decision-making

The main decision making processes in the EU and in its Member States usually concern the presence, representation and influence among the actors and processes in political institutions , in para- political institutions, and in the social and economic sphere.(more specifically among the social partners.) As women are still under-represented in decision-making, their interests are not adequately taken into account at policy-making levels and women cannot influence key decisions in social, economic and (para-)political areas.

However, the EU has developed many actions concerning the balanced representation in the political field, and an identical concentration on this area is revealed in the national action plans. The presence of women in the field of political decision making is characterised by a steady and continuous positive evolution during the last decade, as can be illustrated in the tables of the annex.

At the European level the percentage of female Members of the European Parliament increased from 26.5 in 1994 to 29.7 in 1999; here women account for: 17.1% of members of the Economic and Social Committee, 14.9% of the Committee of the Regions and 6.5% of the European Council. In September 1999, the first woman judge was appointed to the European Court of Justice. All 15 judges had always been men. The 15 judges of the European Court of First Instance include only two women. The number of women Commissioners has remained at five since 1995, despite the arrival of a new Commission in 1999 and various political commitments.

In the European Commission, the percentage of women officials in category A rose slightly from 13.5 to 19 between 1995 and 1999 (within the administrative structure of the European Union, women officials represent: 19% of grade A officials, 56.5% of grade LA officials, 39.4% of grade B officials and 81.0% of grade C officials).

Various measures to raise awareness, in the form of campaigns, brochures and conferences have been developed, but the only direct legislative measure in this political area was the Recommendation of 2 December 1996 concerning the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making. At national level, two Member States have opted for a legislative way of tackling the under-representation of women in politics Belgium introduced quota on the candidate list and France adopted a law on alternating voting lists. [1]

At national level, the percentage of women in positions of power varies considerably from one country to the next, ranging from 10 to 43 % in national Parliaments. Of all executive functions in the EU, more than one fourth is currently being performed by women. In almost every Member State a steady increase can be observed over the last 5 years.

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[1] In Belgium, the Smet-Tobback law of 24 May 1994 on representation of men and women on the lists allowing for no more than two-thirds of candidates of the same gender was first fully put in practice in the June 1999 elections; about 40% of the candidates of the Flemish parties were women. France adopted a law to promote parity between women and men in political life. In Finland the government has fixed gender mainstreaming in the state administration as one of its equality objectives.

The EU and its Member States failed to address other areas of decision making. More attention should go to decision making among social partners, where women remain heavily under-represented. Action programmes need to be developed by the 2 main actors at European level, ETUC and UNICE in which a first step could already be an extensive collection of gender-segregated statistics. The presence of women in trade union decision-making across Europe passed from 23 to 28% over the period 1993-1998. In the ETUC the amount of women on the Board of Directors increased from 14% in 1994 to 24% in 1996.

A gender balanced representation in economic and financial decision making is crucial as well for the empowerment and advancement of women. Women continue to constitute a minority in executive positions on the private-sector labour market. For example, in the financial sector, women occupy only 8.2% of executive positions, 18.2% of managerial jobs and 27.2% of administrative positions. A critical mass however has been achieved in the sector of SME, where women head more than 30% of the small and medium-sized enterprises in Europe.

Obstacles in the broad multi-dimensional field of decision making include the persistence of cultural patterns, gender stereotypes conveyed by the media and the low participation of women in power and decision-making in itself.

A common measurement system of indicators and benchmarking, along the lines of the one agreed by the Council in the field of political decision making[1] should be developed and applied to all areas of decision-making, specifically to the areas of social and economic decision-making.

D. Women's rights are human rights

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women represents an important international legal instrument. Until 10 December 1999, only eleven Member States of the EU signed the Optional Protocol; Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom have yet to sign. Women's rights and non-discrimination on grounds of gender should be included in the new EU Charter on fundamental human rights, have direct effect and be enforceable in courts.

Some particular critical areas of concern can be considered as belonging to women's rights; these are violence and the adequate tackling of health issues.

Since the Beijing Conference in 1995, there has been considerable political awareness of the need to address violence against women in the framework of the European Union and a number of actions and initiatives has been undertaken of which the most important being the Daphne programme to combat violence (1997-2000) and European wide awareness campaign on violence againt women including an opinion poll of Eurostat. Finland, Germany and Spain introduced national action plans or programmes on violence against women.

Some groups of women are especially vulnerable, such as women belonging to minority groups,

[1] On the basis of a report of the Finnish Presidency.

girls and adolescents, women with disabilities, elderly women, in particular refugee and migrant women, who derive their rights from those of their husbands. Asylum seekers generally are not granted recognition from the State for specific gender-related violence for which they seek asylum. The granting of a refugee status to victims of certain forms of violence, such as genital mutilation, is absolutely exceptional.

In 1993 a Recommendation on sexual harassment at the workplace has been adopted. According to a 1997 survey conducted at the initiative of the European Commission, between 30 and 50% of women have experienced some form of sexual harassment at the workplace. In Belgium legislation and programmes have been developed to tackle this type of harassment.

A relative new theme is the trafficking in women and children which is a complex phenomenon with a higher criminal dimension than the drug business. EUROPOL's mandate and a co-ordinated policy include preventive measures, a coherent legal framework, a law enforcement response and assistance to the victims.

Women make up a very important part of people affected by armed conflicts. They are systematically raped, abused and trafficked and victims suffer from psychological and physical trauma. Yet, they are absent from peace negotiations and are excluded from reconstruction initiatives. An important achievement in order to address impunity of perpetrators is the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court (July 1998), which allows for violation, sexual slavery and other similar crimes to entail proceedings as crimes against humanity or war crimes (Articles 7.1 (g) and 8.2 (a) (iii). But so far only one EU Member State (Italy) has ratified the Statute.

The specificity of women's health problems and concerns is due to biological, social and other reasons, as recognized by the 1997 health report of the European Commission. Next to diseases related to the ageing process, the specificity is mainly related to the reproductive function of women. While the Community has already developed many actions and programmes in the field of disease prevention and health promotions, priority areas for the EU and required actions are needed for an adequte approach of health problems and concerns. These areas refer to the prevention and fight against sexually transmitted diseases; HIV/AIDS, the stimulation of research and services in the reproductive health sector; the prevention of genital mutilation of women living in the EU, the improvement of access to health care and services for migrant women, women refugees and victims of trafficking; the effective integration of women with disabilities into society and the best possible treatment of health needs of elderly women.

Neglected critical areas of concern: the girl child, media and the environment

The girl child is probably the most neglected area of the Platform. Neglect or abuses of girls in childhood generally lead to lower status as women and hinders their empowerment. At EU level, progress is recent and still limited: e.g. insertion of children as a target group in the Daphne

programme; actions to combat sex tourism involving children and child pornography on the Internet and actions to prevent the increasing number of girl pregnancies. The introduction of the gender mainstreaming approach or tool in the TEU, art 3, to realize the goals of the EU holds many opportunities for this critical area. The Commission has also announced that it will shortly present a communication on children's rights which in our opinion must focus on the girl child. It is necessary to recognise the specific needs of the girl child in all fields, notably education and training: by supporting a gender sensitive approach and widening the choice of professions; health: by providing adolescents with education and information on reproductive health issues and on sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, as well as with contraceptives, violence; programmes to prevent and fight violence and sexual abuse, as well as female genital mutilation; asylum and immigration policies.

The PFA calls in particular for a balanced portrayal of women and the elimination of negative and degrading images in media. Women are less likely than men to be invited as experts, spokespersons on radio or TV programmes and their image is often stereotyped. The underrepresentation at decisionmaking levels and top jobs in the mass media industry should be turned into a more equally gender balanced participation. Media can also be a powerful tool to raise awareness on gender equality and to promote non- stereotyped gender roles of women and men within the family and society at large.

Women play a key role in developing and promoting environmental sustainability as consumers, producers, educators and professionals. Nevertheless, LIFE, the main EU financial instrument to develop strategies aimed at promoting environmental sustainability, and the 5th Action Programme on the Environment lack a gender perspective. Gender-sensitive indicators need to be developed.

Part II Recommendations for action

The rapporteurs wish to regroup recommendations under a number of horizontal headings. These recommendations indicate some of the necessary further actions and initiatives within the overall goals of gender equality, development and peace to accelerate the implementation of the 12 critical areas of the Beijing PfA beyond the year 2000.

1. Political commitment to create an enabling environment for the implementation of the Platform of Action

Despite substantial progress, the main task is now to turn rights into practice. The Treaty of Amsterdam reinforced the EU legal basis for equality, notably through art. 2 and 3 (equality of women and men as a task and a goal of the Community; gender mainstreaming) and art. 141 (positive actions in employment). The Committee on Women Rights and Equal Opportunities calls for a single coherent legal basis for equality for women and men in all policy areas to be introduced in the Treaty.

Priority areas for action at EU level include:

- A proposal for a directive on positive action measures (art. 141 TEC) which recognises the

collective nature of positive action to redress structural imbalances in society;
- A Fifth Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, provided with adequate funding, targets, benchmarks and assessment mechanisms;
- Setting up a Council of Ministers responsible for Equal Opportunities; in addition the gender perspective should be mainstreamed through all other Councils;
- Setting up a Directorate on gender equality, responsible for equality policies, gender mainstreaming and the Fifth Action programme within the European Commission;
- Gender mainstreaming should be included in all EU programmes towards Central and Eastern Europe; the position of women in society and their rights within the screening and monitoring processes of the applicant countries should be taken into account;
- inclusion of a gender perspective in all agreements with developing countries in all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation.
- firm respect for women's rights in all external relations of the EU.

2. Capacity-building for the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming

Women's empowerment is linked to development of capacities through education and training, access to information, to the media and new technologies. The Internet in particular can be a powerful tool for linking women and women's associations and promoting exchange of information and communication at low cost.

Gender mainstreaming is an important tool, relevant to all critical areas of concern and should be developed both within the EU and in its external relations, in particular in development co-operation. It is a long-term, transformative strategy and should be used to complement, not to replace, positive action measures.

The EU has already developed expertise in the following areas: the employment guidelines and the four-pillar strategy; the structural funds; education and training programmes; the integration of gender issues in development cooperation[1].

It is important to build on these achievements and to develop a leadership role for the EU in gender mainstreaming. A vital tool is the Commission's Annual Report on Equal Opportunities.

3. Accountability for, and assessment of, implementation of the strategies and actions in the PFA

The Beijing PFA contains few specific targets and timetables, by contrast with the Cairo Conference or the Rio Earth Summit. The 2000 review process should set specific goals and targets, benchmarks and a clear time-frame, as essential tools to develop accountability and accelerate implementation.

This should be complemented by a clear indication of the resources allocated and by clear assessment mechanisms. In particular, in the budgets at national and European level, there should be

[1] Council Regulation (EC) 2836/98, OJ L 354, 30/12/98, p. 5

specific budget provisions for the implementation of gender mainstreaming and in as much spending areas as possible a specific reference to equal opportunities needs to be incorporated.

The international community should also make available adequate financial resources to enable developing countries to implement the commitments made at Beijing.

To reinforce the implementation process and keep pressure on governments, the EU delegation in New York should call on the General assembly to decide on a Fifth International Women's Conference in 2005.

4. Co-operation and partnership for implementing the PFA

- Partnership between EU, its Member States and third countries: applicant countries and developing countries.
- Partnership with the civil society, in particular NGOs.
  The recognition of the civil dialogue in the EU Treaty would give women's organisations the means to take action and to be consulted in the process of drafting and implementation of Community legislation.
- Partnership between all EU institutions and with international organisations.

ANNEX

Tables: Women's Situation

Employment rates by sex , 15-64 years, 1988, 1994, 1998

	1988	1995	1998	Evolution(88-98)
Total	59	59.9	61.0	+2
Men	74	70.1	70.8	-3.5
Women	45	49.7	51.2	+6.2

Unemployment rates by sex, 15-64 years, 1994-1998.

	1994	1998	Evolution(94-98)
Total	11.1	10.0	-1.1
Men	10.0	8.6	-1.4
Women	12.7	11.8	-0.9

Evolution of female members in the European Parliament, 1979-2004

Legislative Period	Amount of female MEP	Share of female MEP(%)
1979-1984	71	16.35
1984-1989	82	16
1989-1994	103	19.88
1994-1999	166	26.5
1999-2004	186	29.7

Women in national Parliaments of the EU, %,1996, 2000
Women in the national Governments of the EU, %, 2000

Member State	Female members of Governments, 1999	Female MP(1996)Lower or Single House	Female MP(2000) Lower or Single House
Sweden	52.6	40.4	42.7
Denmark	45.0	33.0	37.4
Finland	44.4	33.5	37
Netherlands	31.0	31.3	36.0
Germany	35.0	26.2	30.9
Austria	31.3	26.8	26.8
Belgium	16.7	12.0	23.3
Spain	13.3	24.6	21.6
Portugal	9.4	13.0	18.7
United Kingdom	29.6	9.5	18.4
Luxembourg	28.6	20.0	16.7
Italy	16.7	11.1	11.1
Ireland	15.6	13.9	12.0
France	34.5	6.4	10.9
Greece		6.3	10.3
Average	28.8	20.4	23.6